



WMGS

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2008

WMGS Volunteers Honored

The Western Michigan Genealogical Society remains strong and vital due to the time, creativity and effort given by dedicated volunteers. At the June Membership Meeting, Co-Volunteer Coordinators, Marlene Fabbro and Shirley De Boer^{CG}, identified and honored seventy-six individuals who volunteered their talents to WMGS during 2007.

WMGS manages two websites, numerous projects and committees that all need active volunteer support. Four elected officers and twenty standing committees require ongoing attention. Many of the volunteers listed below serve in more than one capacity; others may only have the ability to participate in one function or project. Others may only be able to help out with refreshments for membership meetings. All efforts are appreciated and honored, regardless of how much or little time is given.

Currently, over 1,500,000 records are available for genealogists to search in several databases located at WMGS.ORG. Every record was entered by a volunteer over the past decade. Individuals continue to index new sources for all genealogists to access on the web. The Kent County GenWeb site also receives many hours of volunteer time. WMGS educational classes, this *Newsletter* and our quarterly publication, *Michigana*, also require many hours of volunteer time.

The Search Committee assists genealogists in their research. For a fee, a searcher will check a variety of resources available at the Grand Rapids Public Library. This committee is also responsible for obituary look-ups generated either from the website or by snail mail. An obituary will be copied for \$5.00. This service is a great boon to researchers from out of state and provides the Society with ongoing income. That income means WMGS dues have not increased since 1997.

Honored individuals were brought front and center to receive personalized bookmarks as a token of the Society's appreciation. Following a presentation by Toni Benson discussing unusual or overlooked genealogical and family history resources, the celebration continued with cake, punch, conversation and friendship.

Mary Alt
Angela Baum
Christy Borgeld
Karen Blumenshine
Don Bryant
Chris Byron
Sister Michael Ellen Carling
Sue Carpenter
Lisa Christensen
Cindi Closser
Liz Coleman-Smith
Claudia Day
Shirley De Boer
Marvel De Bois
Sue Dombrowski
Ann Ed
Marlene Fabbro
Kaye Fish
Alissa Ford
Shantell Ford
Norallyn Gillette
Nancy Guzzo
Sue Haadsma-Svensson
Graham Hollis
Mary Huizen

Sue Irvine
Janet Jensen
Betty Johnson
Doris Knight
Mindy Koole
Alan Landheer
Jeri Landheer
Margaret Laskowski
Pam McKinley
Bea Meekhof
Roger Moffat
Nancy Myers
Phyllis Neitzel
Sue Osgood
Mary Anne Overbey
Kay Paskiewicz
Kayleen Pawloski
Denni Peterson
Judy Pulte
Sue Rabick
Pat Rademaker
Lucy Read
Evelyn Sawyer
David Schantz
Bobbi Schirado

Laura Schmidt
Wanda Schottler
Marcia Shears
Bill Simmons
Gail Snow
Ron Springsteen
Ginny Staal
Terry Start
Ron Strauss
Linda Stoecker
Jan Stypula
Beverly Summers
Sue Swanlund
Pam Swiler
Jan Van Wyke
Trenna Vander Woude
Judy Vezzehi
Sandy Weidenfeller
Joanie Welke
Dean Wickes
Judy Wilson
June Wodarek
Lynette Yaman
Marge Young
Sharon Younggren

Alert!

Support Preserving the American Historical Record Act

The Preserving the American Historical Record bill, H.R. 6056, was introduced into the House of Representatives on Wednesday, May 14, 2008 by Congressmen Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Chris Cannon (R-UT). The bill has been referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Nine House members are Co-sponsors, however none are from Michigan. More sponsors are needed to ensure future consideration.

Please contact your Congressional Representatives now and urge them to sign on as sponsors. It is critical that there is a strong list of sponsors to get this bill through. Additional House members interested in sponsoring should contact either: Anne Georges in Rep. Hinchey's office at 5-6335 or anne.georges@mail.house.gov or Matt Iandoli in Rep. Cannon's office at 5-7751 or matt.iandoli@mail.house.gov.

This is an important "giant step" for our efforts to bring much needed, and deserved federal resources to preserve original records in individual states. If this bill passes in its current form, Michigan would receive over \$1,600,000. Additional information is available at: www.archivists.org/pahr.

Much of the American record—evidence of births, education, marriage (and divorce), property owned, obligations satisfied and criminal conduct—is held at the state and local level. Very simply, more resources need to be directed to states and regions to ensure essential care so that documents and archival records in many forms can be readily accessed.

(Continued on Page 2)

THE ELUSIVE ANCESTOR

I went searching for an ancestor,
I cannot find him still.
He moved from place to place,
And did not leave a will.
He married where a courthouse burned,
He mended all his fences.
He avoided any man who came,
To take the U. S. census.
He always kept his luggage packed,
This man who had no fame.
And every twenty years or so,
The rascal changed his name.
His parents came from Europe,
They should be upon some list,
Of passengers to the USA,
But somehow they got missed
And no one in the world,
Is searching for this man
So, I play genea-solitaire,
To find him if I can.
I'm told he's buried in a plot,
With tombstone he was blessed.
But the weather took engraving,
And some vandal took the rest.
He died before the county clerks,
Decided to keep records,
No family Bible has emerged,
In spite of all my efforts.
To top it off this ancestor,
Who caused me many groans,
Just to give me one more pain,
Betrothed a girl named Jones!

The Western Michigan Genealogical Society is dedicated to gaining knowledge, preserving records and teaching others about genealogy and family history.

Membership: An annual membership to WMGS is \$20 and begins on January 1st of each year. Membership benefits include: 10% discount on all items at the Sales Table, four issues of Michiganana, free queries in Michiganana and many leadership and volunteer opportunities. Members also have access to the Manuscript File and the Members' online genealogy files at tree.wmgs.org.

Change of Address {Temporary or Permanent}

If you will be moving to a new address permanently, or going on an extended vacation, please notify WMGS at least six weeks before the address change occurs. Be sure to include the date your address will permanently change or the dates when you will leave and plan to return. You may email us at Membership@wmgs.org, or write to: WMGS Treasurer, Western Michigan Genealogical Society, 111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

WMGS Writer's Group

Next Meetings:

July 15 and August 19

The Writing Group holds supportive meetings for those genealogists who want to learn more about and exchange ideas on organizing and writing their own family history. Each meeting takes time to informally discuss questions relevant to each person's work, provide helpful, non-judgmental feedback on current writing projects, and have fun learning about each other and our research. Those who attend are encouraged to bring several copies of something they are currently working on, but it's certainly not a requirement and everyone is invited to participate in the discussion. Members include those who are just starting to write and others who have been working on their genealogy for some time. Everyone is welcome - newbies with fresh ideas, and seasoned vets whose pens have been in the trenches for some time.

We also try to have a presentation to kick our creative juices into gear. Meetings are held eight months of the year with time off in December for the Holidays, and June, July and August so we can make those important genealogical trips to repositories, cemeteries, and the places our ancestors lived in the past. All meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month from 1:30 p.m. (new time) to 4:00 p.m.

If you plan to attend, it is required to let Sister Michael Ellen Carling know you will be there. Call her at 616-643-0206 (home), or 616-643-0225 (office) and her email address is mecarling@grdominicans.org. This gives her an estimate of the number of chairs to set up. She's also the person to call if you have any questions or need more specific directions.

Elections in October

Elections for WMGS officers will be held at the October 4th Membership meeting. President, Vice President, Treasurer and Recording Secretary positions are open. If you would be willing to serve in one of these positions, please contact any one of the individuals named below.

2007-2008

WMGS Officers

President - Mindy Koole
Koole2@comcast.net
616-691-7986

Vice-President - Marcia Shears
U08554@hotmail.com
616-458-1221

Treasurer - Marlene Fabbro
Mfabbro@sbcglobal.net

Recording Secretary - Janet Jensen
JanetJ6990@aol.com
616-874-8035

Corresponding Secretary - Lucy Read
LRead49503@aol.com
616-458-9117

Michiganana Editor - Bobbi Schirado
schirado@iserv.net
616-887-3977

Identifying Important Dates

By Shirley De Boer ^{CG}

Sometimes researchers are so bent on finding a particular document that their focus is narrow and it keeps them in a holding pattern. There are ways to avoid this dilemma; for instance, when a birth record is not available, use the month and year from the 1900 federal census and cite this as the source.

A marriage date can often be determined from the census, but not always; when the math can't be done based on the census, simply choose the year before the first child was born and enter that date in the following way "c1878."

The same is true of a death certificate; many other records can serve as a citation, for example: a gravestone inscription, an eye-witness account, newspaper evidence or a letter from a relative. If the elusive parents' names of the deceased are needed, trace a probable brother living in the same area; those can quickly be checked in the courthouse.

In short, don't let one document keep research from new exploration; more information will surface and perhaps even the document originally desired. Sufficient detail on a cognitive map will stimulates the mind to new questions, ideas and places to examine!

Keep an Open Mind!

Alert! American Historical Record Act (Continued from Page 1)

The Preserving the American Historical Record Act proposes to increase federal support for state and local archival records held by government agencies, historical societies, libraries, and related organizations. This initiative would preserve and provide access to historical records by supporting:

- the creation of a wide variety of access tools, including archival finding aids, documentary editions, indexes, and images of key records online;

- preservation actions to protect historical records from harm, prolong their life, and preserve them for public use, including digitization projects, electronic records initiatives, and disaster preparedness and recovery;

- initiatives to use historical records in new and creative ways to convey the importance of state, territorial, and community history, including the development of teaching materials for K-12 and college students, active participation in National History Day, and support for life-long learning opportunities; and

- programs to provide education and training to archivists and others who care for historical records, ensuring that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill their important responsibilities.



Magnifying Brick Wall Clues

Saturday, November 1, 2008

Prince Conference Center at Calvin College

1800 East Beltline SE

Grand Rapids, Michigan

OUR SPEAKERS

Lisa Alzo

Lisa A. Alzo earned a Master of Fine Arts degree and has been a genealogist for over 17 years. She is the author of seven books, as well as numerous articles for genealogy magazines. Lisa is the 2nd Vice-President of the Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS), and also serves on the Board of Directors for Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International. She is an instructor of online genealogy classes for GenClass.com, and the National Institute for Genealogical Studies. She speaks frequently at national conferences, genealogical and historical societies.

Michael John Neil

Michael John Neill is a mathematics instructor at Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois. He teaches a week long series of computer genealogy workshops and is currently a member of the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS). Michael conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including "Ancestry" Magazine.

SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION: 9:00 - 9:30

MORNING SESSIONS, 9:30-12:00, presented by Lisa Alzo:

9:30-10:30 Identifying Immigrant Cluster Communities.

There are a handful of "cluster" immigrant communities throughout the United States that blossomed during the immigration influx of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of these include Irish communities in Boston, German and Dutch Settlers in Pennsylvania, Polish groups in Buffalo and Detroit, Slovaks in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, among others. This session will cover how to identify chain migrations and cluster communities by utilizing census and immigration records, and other resources. Several examples of such immigrant communities will be used to illustrate the research process and its results.

11:00-12:00 The Evidence! Following Online Clues to Solve Your Family History.

Through sample case studies, this session will illustrate how to effectively follow online clues to see how much you can discover about your most elusive ancestors with just a few clicks of the mouse and savvy surfing! You'll learn how to create a step-by-step research plan for searching the Internet and how to set realistic expectations. Working through false leads and online pitfalls, you'll learn to identify clues to track elusive ancestors. Sample Ohio case studies will be discussed.

LUNCH 12:15 - 1:15 A Deli Delight.

Lunch includes three chef's specialty salads, and a tureen of homemade soup, followed with chips, bakery fresh bread and rolls, trays of natural cheeses, and premium deli meats. Beverages are also included. Take time to get to know your table mates and exchange surnames.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS, 1:30-4:00, presented by Michael John Neill:

1:30-2:30 Seeing Patterns: Organizing Your Information.

There is more to organizing your information than entering a few names into a database and filing copies in a drawer. This presentation discusses ways to organize information and resources to help you write about your ancestors, notice patterns and trends that are not obvious, and see gaps or holes in your research.

3:00-4:00 Brick Walls From A to Z.

This lecture discusses an alphabetical list of bricks that can create those frustrating family history "brick walls." An awareness of the causes of many brick walls can help genealogists make a breakthrough more likely.

REGISTRATION

NOTE: Registration fee includes buffet lunch and all class materials. Parking is free at the Prince Center. If you have additional questions, go to <<http://register.wmgs.org/>>.

IMPORTANT - Registrations will open on 20 July. Please register online at <http://register.wmgs.org/>

You can pay online with PayPal, or by printing out your completed online registration form and mailing it and a check to: WMGS Seminar Registrations, Roger Moffat, 3020 76th St SE, Caledonia MI 49316-8398. Please make your check out to WMGS. If you DO NOT have Internet access, please use the form below and mail it and your check to the address above.

WMGS will be unable to refund registration fees after October 15, 2008.

NAME _____

- Early Registration
by September 30th \$15.00 _____

ADDRESS _____

- Late Registration
Received by Oct. 15th \$20.00 _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

NO Registrations accepted after
October 15, 2008.

PHONE _____

**Space is LIMITED - Register Early! Learn new research techniques and meet new cousins!
Carpool to Save Gasoline!**



Western Michigan Genealogical Society
Grand Rapids Public Library, 111 Library
St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
website: www.wmgs.org

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The Western Michigan
Genealogical Society

Presents

Magnifying Brick Wall Clues

November 1, 2008

First Annual Fall Conference

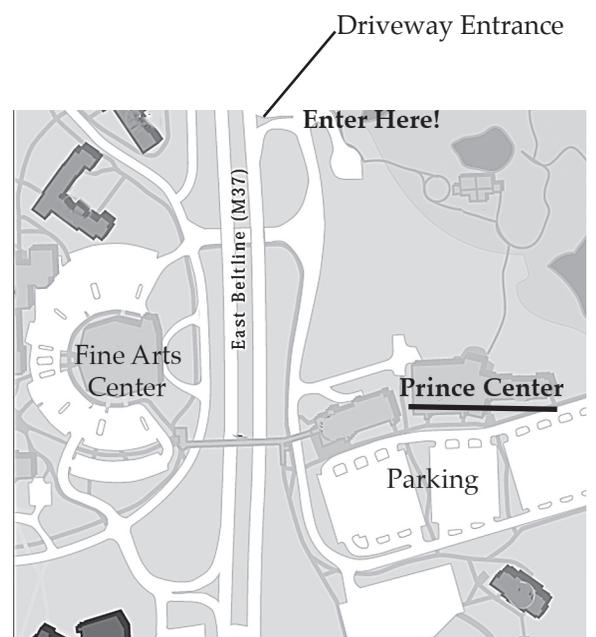
DIRECTIONS

Prince Conference Center at Calvin College
1800 East Beltline SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Calvin College is located north of Burton Street and South of Lake Drive. The campus straddles the East Beltline. Major thruways crossing the East Beltline are 28th Street on the south, and I-96 to the north.

The Prince Conference Center is located on the *East* side of the East Beltline (also designated as M-37). The entrance to the East Campus is located *north* of the Prince Center.

Three large parking lots are available directly in front of the Prince Conference Center. Parking is **FREE**.



Additional Directions may be found at:
www.calvin.edu/map/campusmap.pdf